

## HAWAII'S FIERY PEAKS.

## THREATENING ERUPTION.

ETERNAL SNOW AND ETERNAL FIRE SIDE  
BY SIDE IN THE HOME OF THE  
GODDESS PELE.

MAUNA LOA'S RENEWED ACTIVITY—THE BOWL  
OF KILAUEA BRIMMING OVERFLOW OF  
FIRE—PAINT AND FICTION CON-  
CERNING THE GREAT  
VOLCANOS.

The Hawaiian Islands possess probably a greater variety of climate and diversity of natural features than any other group of islands of like extent in all the world. But the one dominant feature for which they are best known and most famed is to be found in their mountain peaks and volcanoes. While many other Pacific islands are of coral formation, these are distinctly volcanic. Each member of the group has one or more commanding peaks. On the largest, Hawaii itself, are the stupendous cones of Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea, which rival the loftiest of the Alps, and far outrank any other island mountains in the world; while just across the channel, in Maui, towers the gigantic Haleakala, an extinct volcano surpassing Mount Etna in size and grandeur.

Kilauea is always active, and at the present time seems threatening another serious eruption. The latest mail advices from Hawaii tell that the crater has for some time been seething and bubbling, and sending up magnificent fountain jets of fire that are visible for miles. Venture some visitors, going to the edge, found the fiery bowl more than full, the molten lava at the center being several feet higher than at the edges. Now and then it would flow over and pour down the slope of the mountain-side for some distance, until it cooled, formed a crust, and thus dammed up the torrent. Earthquake shocks were frequent, and there were all the symptoms of an impending eruption. This fact, however, caused no panic, but rather attracted hordes of visitors, eager to witness the incomparable spectacle.

There is probably nowhere on the globe a scene more awe-inspiring and dreadfully sublime than that presented by the crater of Haleakala. Round about the mountain and on its slopes is Paradise. You ride for hours amid the semi-tropical verdure and bloom. Up to the very summit there is not a sign of what lies just beyond the mountain rim. You reach the top ten thousand feet in air, and glance back over a glorious panorama of land and ocean, and involuntarily murmur:

"Summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea."

And then you look before you and see "the barren beach of Hell at the edge." At your feet lies a stupendous chasm, 3,000 feet deep and more than six miles wide. In its desolate expanse almost any of the great cities of the world could find room to be swallowed up. Placed upon its floor, the tallest peaks of the Catskills could scarcely be seen above its sulphurous parapet. And in all its gloomy recesses there is not a tree nor a shrub nor a flower nor a blade of grass. There is no living object. No bird even flies across it. It lies there in eternal silence and eternal death, lifted high up toward the heavens of perpetual summer, a frozen upland smiling face of nature, the Abomination of Desolation in the midst of Paradise. Not even the awful lake of fire on Mauna Loa so thrills the beholder with fear and dread as this dark desert.

"It is Hell with the fires out," said one visitor, reverently crossing himself, as he first gazed upon its gloomy depths.

From the crest of Haleakala one can see the lofty peaks of Hawaii, forty miles away, seemingly floating in mid-air. Crossing the channel and landing at Hilo, one makes his way toward the peak of Mauna Loa through a lush jungle of luxuriant tropical vegetation. Even the lava, which, cold and hard as flint, covers miles of the land, is densely overgrown with shrubs. It is a ride of thirty miles, and one should take two days for it; and he may be awake the night between them and see vivid flashes of volcanic fire playing on the heights above him, like sheet lightning on the edges of a distant thunder cloud. The lake of fire, Haleakala, is not at the summit of Mauna Loa, but on its side, only 4,000 feet up. It is at one side of the crater called Kilauea. On the very brink of the abyss stands a hotel, the Volcano House, from the windows of which one may look down into the pit, 3,000 feet, and across it, three miles, to where an enormous blue cloud forever floats above the bosom of Haleakala.

It is a difficult descent from the hotel to the floor of the crater. At first there is a little vegetation, but after that, for 2,500 feet down, and then for three miles across, Kilauea is as barren and as desolate as Haleakala itself. There is nothing but lava, black, shining, glossy, lying in fantastic fields and waves. No pen can describe the sensation which the visitor feels in treading upon such a floor and marching across it for miles. He does not think "the dust we tread upon was once alive"; no, but it was once a seething, fiery mass, to approach which would have meant instant death. And even now there are ominous fissures and bubbles, hot and menacing. And who knows at what moment the Goddess Pele may stir the whole again into a fervent glow? But with a self-surprising dourness one keeps on, straight across, to where, close by the further wall, a smaller crater lies within the great one.

This is Haleakala. One climbs the rugged rampart of volcanic rocks a hundred feet high, and looks within. It is a huge bowl, with rough walls, an oval, perhaps, 500 feet in size. Its level bottom is a dull red here and there, but mostly black. The air is as hot as the breath of an oven, and still as the grave, and an awful silence prevails. Then a flash of fire, like lightning, plays across it from shore to shore. Then the floor of half-cracked lava breaks up like ice in a fire. The huge blocks are tossed about like bubbles. In a moment the entire lake is a furnace, gray, a crucible. It foams and boils and surges. It is a molten mass, blood red or glowing orange. Crimson spray dashes against the rocks in breakers forty feet high, and fiery spray goes flying far above the crest of the rampart; so that the spectators seek shelter behind masses of lava and in rude caves. There are literally acres of melted rock boiling furiously, hotter than molten iron. The waves thunder against the walls, like the waves of the ocean in a winter storm, and rush furiously into the caverns they have made in the rock under the very feet of the startled visitor. Another moment and the undimmed rampart may topple over into that dreadful flood. Yet with fearful fascination one clings to the rock, and watches the gory spray, and listens to the raving thunder of the fiery surf, with never a thought of danger.

## THE STORY OF PELE.

This lake of fire was, in Hawaiian mythology, the home of Pele, the goddess of volcanoes. She came, in ancient days, from her first home in Samoa, with her six sisters and her brother. First she settled at Moanalua, in Oahu. Thence she moved to Kalaupapa, in Molokai. Thence she went up to the House of the Sun, Haleakala. And, finally, she came to Haleakala. Here, in the cone-shaped craters of Kilauea, she and her family lived, and amused themselves with playing checkers and dancing to the music of the roaring surf of fire. No other deity was so greatly feared. No one dared to approach the mountain without first making her an offering of oleio berries. And when in her anger she caused an eruption of the volcanic fires, she drove away a dozen villages. The crater and its swept away a dozen villages. The crater and its swept away a dozen villages. The crater and its swept away a dozen villages.

the summit of Mauna Loa, to revel in the eternal snows that crown that mighty peak.

One day the court of Pele was visited by Kamahele, the "Child of a Pig." This huge monster, half beast, half human, was an adventurous divinity, who had for ages been wandering about, wading from island to island, wherever his swinish fancy led. He became the guest of Pele, and presently became a suitor for her hand. He stood on the rampart of Haleakala and wooed her in a voice that drowned the thunder. She rejected him with scorn, and taunted him with being the offspring of a pig. Then a great battle arose between them. She poured out fire and molten rocks against him, while he brought up the water of the sea to extinguish the flames. At first he prevailed and almost flooded the crater. But with a desperate effort Pele and her sisters drank up the water and drove him into the sea, hurling after him rocks and mountains, which formed islands scattered afar over the Pacific.

The first person who ventured to descend into the crater of Kilauea without first sacrificing to Pele was the Hawaiian Princess Kapahulu, in 1825. She had become a Christian, and, to prove the falseness of the ancient myths, announced



HALEAKALAU.

her intention of defying the wrath of Pele on the very brink of Haleakala. Her husband and friends vainly sought to dissuade her; and vainly an aged priestess warned her back, with prophesies of destruction. She steadfastly proceeded, followed by a band of eighty trembling fellow-converts, who would have turned back in dismay but for her example and leadership. To the very brink of the lake of fire she led them, and there sang a Christian hymn, and returned in safety. From that time faith in and fear of Pele have declined, until now there are but few believers in her power.

## THE VOLCANO IN POLITICS.

The most notable eruption of Kilauea occurred in November, 1790, and had an important influence upon the subsequent political history of the islands. Two chieftains, Keoni and Kamehameha, were contending in war for the supreme rulership of Hawaii, and the former seemed certain of victory. Setting out from Hilo, he marched toward Kau by a road leading near Kilauea. While the army was encamped near the crater a terrific earthquake occurred, a black cloud made the noonday as dark as midnight and there was a fearful rain of black sand and ashes, like that which buried Pompeii and Herculaneum. When the eruption was ended one-third of Keoni's followers were found to be dead, buried and suffocated in the sand and ashes. Some were found lying down, some standing, some



A FISSURE IN THE LAVA BEDS.

in the act of fleeing for safety, some embracing their wives and children. This was taken as a sign that the mighty Pele was then on Kamehameha's side. And the next year Keoni was slain, and Kamehameha became lord of Hawaii and founded the dynasty which has ended with the fall of Liliuokalani. In 1801 there was a great eruption of Haleakala, at the other side of Mauna Loa, which destroyed many villages and filled up a lake. Countless pigs were sacrificed to Pele, but in vain. At last Kamehameha cut off half of his own hair, which was considered sacred, and threw it into the lava flow, and then the eruption ceased.

Again in 1810 Kilauea, which had been quiet for fifty years, burst forth with awful fury. A stream of molten lava borrowed underground from the crater twelve miles to the coast at Nanawale, where it flowed into the sea. For three weeks it raged, bursting from its burrow to destroy several villages, though not one life was lost. The light from the crater was so intense that at a distance of forty miles one could, by its aid, read the finest print at midnight.

Most of the great eruptions, however, have come from Mokuawewe, the huge crater at the summit of Mauna Loa. It is usually entirely quiet, except at the time of actual eruption, while Kilauea is never still for more than an hour. About once in nine years there is a great outburst from Mokuawewe. One of the most famous of all was that of 1855. The lava flow broke, on August 11, from the northeastern side of the mountain, at a height of twelve thousand feet, and continued with unabated energy until November 22 of the following year. The stream of molten lava was fully two miles wide, and it spread over an area of three hundred square miles, depositing thereon, it is reckoned, thirty-eight billion cubic feet of lava. Ravines and valleys were filled up, and vast primeval forests annihilated. The stream of destruction made its way straight toward Hilo, and reached a point within a few miles of the town. A great panic arose among the people. The Rev. Dr. Titus Coan, who was then at the head of the Christian mission there, held a special service of prayer for the procreation of the town. And the next day the lava had indeed stopped. Many of the natives were so impressed by this incident, or coincidence, that they immediately abandoned their heathen worship and accepted Christianity.

A curious sequel to this story, however, is also to be told. On November 5, 1880, there was another tremendous eruption, and again the lava flowed straight toward Hilo. For months it made its way unimpeded, and came to within a mile of the town. The inhabitants prepared to flee. Prayers were sent up, and the lava, after a long pause, went on to meet it, with the incantations and rites of the old religion, and these unaccountable pigs into the advancing torrent. Whereupon, her great joy and the announcement of the whole people, on August 10, 1881, the flow stopped and the town was saved.

## THE OUTBREAK OF MAUNA LOA.

Another great eruption occurred on March 27, 1868, accompanied by a series of earthquake shocks that wrecked half the villages on the whole island. Then a vast quantity of mud was discharged from the mountain, pouring for three miles down the slope in a stream thirty feet deep and half a mile wide, and burying a great number of human beings and animals. Then a tidal wave fifty feet high rolled in from the ocean and swept away a dozen villages. The crater and its swept away a dozen villages. The crater and its swept away a dozen villages. The crater and its swept away a dozen villages.

of Mokuawewe burst through an underground channel. Five thousand feet up the mountain it sucked up the air in a fiery fountain hundreds of feet high, and then flowed on to the sea. The distance was ten miles, and it traversed it within two hours, destroying all houses and hundreds of cattle. The flow only continued four days. Of this eruption the Rev. Dr. Coan gives a vivid account. On March 27, he says, "it began at a crack in the morning near the summit of Mauna Loa. It gave no forewarning; the fire burst up out of the ground, throwing a fountain of smoke high in the air. Then a great column of smoke rose a thousand feet, and then a flood of fire came down the mountain. The lava was thrown up toward the south of the first; soon the red lava began running down the side of the mountain. 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